

Kakadu Highlights No. 9: September 6-19, 2009

Section 1: Twin Falls Creek: September 6-8

This is one of the easiest walks we offer, minimal pack carrying combined with day walks and swim stops along one of the most scenic creeks in Kakadu.

The 350 kilometre drive from Darwin to Twin Falls normally takes most of the first day. If possible, we will climb up and camp at the top of Twin Falls as the camp below Twin Falls is in an area where swimming is neither safe nor permitted. The walk to the top goes up a fairly steep hill, through an interesting sandstone maze and out to the creek above Twin Falls.

If we arrive early enough, it may be possible to take a boat up the gorge and visit the base of the falls with an Aboriginal guide. There will be an extra charge for this.

Once at the top of the falls, we stop, have a break and take time to enjoy the views. A simple side trip is a climb to an Aboriginal art site on a high point for more views. We spend the rest of the day and the following one exploring and enjoying the shady rock ledges, sandy beaches and cool pools that we find in the seven kilometre long upper gorge. This section finishes with the climb back down to the vehicle and the drive to Coinda.

If no one is leaving or joining at this point, we will move straight to Jim Jim without going to Coinda. If the guide does go to Coinda to drop someone off or pick someone up, those continuing on to section two will have the option of remaining at Jim Jim Gorge.

Maps. 1:50 000 Jim Jim Falls or 1:100 000 Jim Jim.

Terrain and Difficulty (more info in the general description after section three)

Overall	Level 1
Terrain	Level 1. The climb to the top of Twin Falls is steep but straightforward along a well defined track. The walk along Twin Falls Creek is mostly flat and easy with a minimal amount of rock hopping. This is one of the easiest walks we offer.
Vegetation	Level 1-2. Mostly open woodland or open areas along the creek.
Hours	You carry your full pack for only 1-2 hours on the way up and again on the way back. Day walk will be fairly long.
Packs	Pack weight - level 1. You need to carry only 2 days food. You need a sleeping bag but are unlikely to need a tent.
Art	We may visit a couple of minor sites on this walk.
Campsites	Sand or rock ledges. Excellent site near the water. We should have it to ourselves.
Swims	Swimming is excellent. Good pools all along the creek.
Lowlights	The very long drive to the start of the walk. Possible tourist crowds at Twin Falls.
Highlights	View from the top of Twin Falls. Good weather. Great swimming holes. Light packs.

Section 2: Jim Jim and Rainforest Gorge: September 8-13

The drive from Coinda to Jim Jim is less than 100 kilometres but may take more than two hours due to the rough nature of the final ten kilometres of the track. After a swim at Jim Jim Creek, we begin the four kilometre walk to the entrance to the one of the longest rainforest gorges in Kakadu. Although it is much smaller than nearby Jim Jim and Twin Falls Creeks, the creek which created this gorge continues to flow long after its neighbours have stopped.

As camping is not permitted in Rainforest Gorge, we normally camp at the base of the gorge. The walk up the gorge is only six kilometres long but it is strenuous — a continuous scramble over boulders and rocks of all sizes. However, it is very shady and the gorge contains several good pools where we can stop for a swim so we normally take a full day for the walk. However, if the drive to Coinda proves unnecessary, we may decide to do the walk to the top of the gorge on the first day.

The camp site on the flat rock ledges at the top of the rainforest gorge is magnificent. Beautiful waterfalls cascade through a series of inviting pools under a shady rainforest canopy. If time permits, we will spend at least half a day here before pushing on across the plateau to Jim Jim Creek. A lack of landmarks along the way means that we never take the exact same route. A lack of water means that we must reach the pools on Jim Jim Creek that day.

Once at Jim Jim, we have a choice. We may decide to head upstream to get further from the marked trail or we may camp near where we hit the creek. Whichever we choose, the area near Jim Jim Creek is fairly flat so the walking is relatively easy. If time permits, we will spend a day walking upstream to the monoliths, four large rock pillars on the edge of a large pool. Along the way, we stop to examine some Aboriginal art and cool off with a swim or two along the way.

We then head back downstream to the top of Jim Jim Falls, over 200 metres from top to bottom with a final sheer drop of 160 metres, we enjoy spectacular views down the gorge and across the plains to the distant escarpment on the horizon. If time permits, we climb down to the top of the main drop so that we can enjoy another pool and experience what it feels like to look over a sheer 160 metre drop.

On the final morning we follow the marked trail down to the bottom of the gorge below the falls. After one last swim, we climb into the vehicles for the drive to Coinda.

After lunch, if people are interested and if time permits, we can go and see the art sites at Nourlangie Rock. The day finishes with a bistro meal at the pub and a night in budget accommodation. This section finishes with the 6.45 a.m. Yellow Waters Cruise the following morning. The cruise gives you the opportunity to see the wetlands wildlife at close range, far closer than you could approach on foot. The early hour ensures that you see far more of the wildlife than those who do the midday cruises.

Maps. 1:50 000 Jim Jim Falls or 1:100 000 Jim Jim.

Terrain and Difficulty (more info in the general description after section three)

Overall	Level 3.
Terrain	Level 3-4. Most of the walk is relatively flat and fairly easy. There is a steep part along a marked track to Jim Jim Creek below the falls. The walk up or down the rainforest gorge requires a lot of rock hopping and scrambling over boulders the size of small trucks. It is quite strenuous. Some of our clients who had never walked in this kind of terrain considered it to be one of the most physically demanding things they had ever done.
Vegetation	Level 2-3. Mostly open woodland or open areas along the creek. Dense forest in Rainforest Gorge makes for slow going.
Hours	4-6 hours most days.
Packs	Pack weight - level 2. You need to carry four days food. You need a sleeping bag but are unlikely to need a tent.
Art	There is one major site that most groups visit as well as several minor sites we might see.
Campsites	Sand or rock ledges. Excellent sites near the water. We should have them to ourselves.
Swims	Swimming is excellent. Good pools all along both creeks.
Lowlights	Possible tourist crowds at Jim Jim.
Highlights	The view at the top of Jim Jim Falls. Perfect weather. Great swimming holes. Rainforest Gorge and Falls.

Note for section 2. Some groups do the walk in the reverse direction, Jim Jim Creek followed by Rainforest Gorge. The walk up the rainforest gorge is so strenuous that some groups choose to miss the walk up the gorge and walk over and back from Jim Jim Creek. This drops the walk to level 2.

Section 3: Barramundi Creek: September 12-19

This is our longest walk in the Barramundi area, giving you more time to relax and enjoy the best that the area has to offer. It takes you to some of the nicest permanently flowing creeks and largest pools we have found in the park. You see a variety of landscapes, deep gorges, beautiful swimming pools and cascades as well as a number of little known Aboriginal art sites.

From Cooinda, it is only about an hour's drive. The last 15 kilometres is on a gravel road; the rest is bitumen. From the parking area, a relatively easy three kilometre walk brings us first to some pools, then up a hill for some good views, through a patch of forest and finally back down to the creek and our first campsite near a pool, perfect for swimming as are most of the pools we encounter..

During the next seven days, we visit magical spots our clients have christened the Emerald Pool, Piccaninny Pools and the Buff Pool. Our route takes us along creeks, up a steep hill, across a plateau, down to another pool and back via the main creek. There are many possible campsites so we can make our decision according to how fast the group is going and how they feel at the time. With time on our side, we may be able to spend a day exploring a lovely little valley where we normally only get to spend an hour or two.

We will almost certainly have the option of doing some of the walking without packs or. The longest of these walks, sometimes done as an overnight walk with packs, takes us up to one of the best high view points in the park, then down to an amazing cave and some Aboriginal art sites. Water levels at the campsite on this loop can be quite low at this time of year, so it is likely to be better done as a day walk without packs. Your guide will have a better idea at the time. On the final day, we walk out to the vehicle and return to Darwin.

Maps. 1:50 000 Goodparla or 1:100 000 Mundogie.

Terrain and Difficulty (more info in the general description after this section)

Overall	Level 2.
Terrain	Level 2-3. The terrain ranges from open woodland to narrow rainforest gorges. Most is relatively flat and easy. A few places require scrambling over river stones of a variety of sizes. There are a few steep, but short climbs. The leisurely pace makes it easier than many of our other trips. The first part of the optional high point side loop or daywalk is more difficult and would rate as level 4. It includes a steep climb up and an equally steep climb down. The decision as to whether or not to do this will be made during the trip when the group can see how they are all going.
Vegetation	Level 2-3. Mostly open woodland or open areas along the creeks. There is likely to be one section of grass covered rocks on one short section.
Hours	4-6 hours most days.
Packs	Pack weight - level 2-3. You need to carry six days food.
Art	There are a few art sites along this route, the best are on the optional loop.
Campsites	Sand or rock ledges. Excellent sites near the water. We should have most or all of them to ourselves.
Swims	Swimming is excellent. This walk takes us to some of the largest, clearest pools in Kakadu.
Lowlights	Tourist masses at the beginning and end of the walk. The long drive back to Darwin.
Highlights	The huge, clear pools. The waterfall at Emerald Pool. The high views on the side loop.

General Terrain and Difficulty for all sections

- Terrain** Little or none of the walking is on a marked trail. If you have never done any off-track walking through moderately rough terrain, nothing we can say can adequately describe the experience. The photos on our website, www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au, can give you a partial picture, but they cannot substitute for the real thing. Most of those who have not had any off-track walking experience find it more difficult than those who have done it before.
- Anyone who does not regularly (average twice a month) go bushwalking carrying a full pack would benefit from doing some pre-trip training. Do this and you will almost certainly enjoy the trip more than if you do not. The relatively easy nature of sections one and three means that they should suit almost anyone who meets our minimum level of fitness. Anyone who has already done section two should find that section three is easier than it would have been if they were beginning with section three.
- Climate** September is hot. The average daily maximum temperature for the month is 36°C (about 97°F). Fortunately, the average nightly minimum is reasonably cool at about 20-21°C (68-70°F). As the minimum temperatures have been known to drop below 15°C (about 60°F), we recommend bringing a lightweight sleeping bag. (Some people do, however, choose to replace their sleeping bag with thermals.) As long as we get an early start in the mornings, we should have plenty of time to rest during the hottest part of the day.
- Although past records suggest less than a 50% chance of rain, you can get hit by an isolated storm. Bringing a lightweight tent fly will ensure you stay dry if it does happen to rain.
- Wildlife** Birds are always present but spread out at this time of year. You are unlikely to see many large animals. The Yellow Waters cruise is excellent for birds, many of which you are unlikely to see on the walk. It also gives you a good chance to see large estuarine crocodiles.
- Fishing** Not permitted on this walk.

Notes: all sections

Those doing more than one section of the trip will have to carry only what they need on each section. Additional food and clothing can be left in the vehicle during the walks.

Make sure you have your lunch, a water bottle, and some money with you in the vehicle during the drives as it may be difficult to get into your pack during the journey.

A day pack may be useful on sections one and three.

Map. The 1:250 000 Kakadu park map shows all areas but is not good enough for navigation.

Cooinda

Cooinda is a resort situated in the heart of the Kakadu wetlands. This is an area noted for its wildlife — and mosquitoes. The former make it a great place to visit, the latter make it an uncomfortable place for an overnight walk. The attractions at Cooinda include the Yellow Waters cruises, the Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural Centre and a short dry season nature walk along a marked trail.

The Yellow Waters cruise is the best way to see the wetlands. It allows you approach the wildlife (especially crocodiles and birds) much closer than you could on foot. The cultural centre is a few hundred metres from the hotel and provides an insight into the lives of the Aboriginal traditional owners of the park. The nature walk offers a pleasant way to spend an hour or two, especially early in the morning or late in the afternoon.

Both the cultural centre and the hotel offer a variety of souvenirs for sale. Bring extra cash or a credit card if you think that you might wish to purchase anything beyond the drinks, ice creams and lunches that most people purchase there.

Itinerary: Kakadu Highlights No. 9

Note 1 Day 0 is the day before departure.

Note 2 This itinerary is subject to change.

Section 1 Twin Falls Creek

Day 0 Pre-trip meeting, 6.30 p.m., Pool Side Bar & Restaurant, Holiday Inn Darwin, 122 The Esplanade. **Note.** There are two Holiday Inns next to each other on the Esplanade. The meeting is in the taller one, closer to the roundabout at the end of the street. **This meeting is important.** If you cannot make the meeting, please advise us well in advance.

Day 1 8 a.m. pick up. Pick up is from your accommodation if you have notified us where you are staying at least a week before departure or have made other arrangements at the pre-trip meeting. Otherwise, pick up is from the Mitchell Street Tourist Precinct at 69 Mitchell Street.

Drive to Kakadu. Begin walk carrying full packs. Bush camp.

Day 2 Bush camping, day trip with day packs.

Day 3 Return to vehicles. Drive to Cooina, to pick up and drop off or straight to Jim Jim if not required.

Those ending here can catch Greyhound-Pioneer bus to Darwin or Katherine leaving mid to late afternoon. To be safe, check current timetable and book in advance.

Section 2 Jim Jim Creek & Rainforest Gorge

Day 3 Those beginning with this section catch the Greyhound-Pioneer bus from Darwin to Cooina at about 6.30 a.m. There is only one bus per day. Check the current timetable when you book. The cost of the bus is not included in the cost of the tour.

On arrival, you can wait in the open air pub. Due to the fact that the members of the group are finishing a walk that morning, we cannot be more specific about the arrival time than to say it will be about lunch time.

Drive to Jim Jim. Begin walk, carrying full packs. Bush camp.

Day 4-6 Bush camping, possibly carrying full packs for part of day.

Day 7 Return to vehicle. Drive to Cooina, book into budget accommodation. Opportunity to wash clothes and have hot shower. Bring towel and toiletries and money for drinks.

Cook-it-yourself barbecue meal at the pub.

Day 8 6.45 a.m. Yellow Waters Cruise. End of section two.

Those ending here can catch Greyhound-Pioneer bus to Darwin or Katherine leaving mid to late afternoon. To be safe, check current timetable and book in advance.

Section 3 Barramundi

Day 7 Those beginning with this section catch the Greyhound bus from Darwin to Cooina at about 6.30 a.m. There is only one bus per day. Check the current timetable when you book. The cost of the bus is not included in the cost of the tour.

On arrival, wait in the open air pub and meet the group there about lunch time. Due to the fact that the members of the group are finishing a walk that morning, we cannot be more specific about the arrival time than to say it will be about lunch time.

Day 8 6.45 am Yellow Waters cruise. Drive to Barramundi. Begin walk carrying full packs. Bush camp.

Day 9-13 Bush camp, carrying full packs most days.

Day 14 Return to vehicle. Drive to Darwin. Drop off at your accommodation, late afternoon.